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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BAGHDAD 005066

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PNAT](#) [KDEM](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: IECI DISPATCHES AUDIT TEAMS TO TRADITIONAL  
ELECTION HOTSPOTS WHILE IECI BOARD PONDERES NEXT MOVES

Classified By: Political Counselor Robert S. Ford  
for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

¶1. (C) Summary. As part of a previously planned initiative to enhance the credibility of the election process, the Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq (IECI) will conduct post-election audits in five cities throughout Iraq. These audits follow the pre-election audits conducted that established the baseline for election operations. These audits are being conducted in the midst of the board's heated debates concerning which actions, if any, should be taken regarding an audit of the Out-of-Country Voting (OCV) process. Meanwhile, the IECI board intends to conduct a board-level review of the 20 category red complaints filed to date that, if substantiated, could possibly impact the outcome of the elections. The IECI's reaction to allegations of fraud is already becoming a bell weather issue for the Sunni Arab political leadership, and we are urging the UN election team and the IECI leadership to address fraud allegations seriously. End Summary.

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AUDIT TEAMS DISPATCHED TO FIVE IRAQI CITIES  
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¶2. (C) UN Commissioner to the IECI Craig Jenness told PolOff on December 19 that the previously planned IECI audit teams would begin deployment on December 20 to conduct post-election audits. The five sites are Mosul, Irbil, Hillah, Kirkuk, and Baqubah. The intent of the two-day audits is to review the credibility of the overall election process in those areas and to conduct spot checks on selected polling station ballot boxes and counting forms. Jenness explained that these audit locations were previously selected based on the most likely areas for election-related complaints. He also said that the IECI wanted a representative sample of locations in order to minimize claims of bias against any particular group or sect. He stated that although Basra was on their original list post-election audit list, this location was dropped primarily due to logistics difficulties and the lack of available personnel to staff the Basrah audit team.

¶3. (C) Jenness stated that these audit teams follow the pre-election audit process that was conducted, with little fanfare, prior to the elections. Those audits were conducted in Kut, Baqubah, Kirkuk, Mosul, and Irbil, and provided a baseline for the follow-on audits. Despite their low profile, the pre-election audit visits did attract the attention of the political parties, Jenness added, and served notice that the IECI would be actively engaged in election process oversight before, during, and after December 15.

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ELECTION DAY EXAMINERS ADD TO ENFORCEMENT TOOLKIT  
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¶4. (C) Jenness stated that on the actual Election Day, teams of IECI examiners were assigned to polling centers throughout Iraq to independently review the election work of the IECI at the field level as well as to act as another set of eyes and ears to witness the overall electoral process. IECI International Elections Assistance Team (IEAT) staff told PolOff on December 18 that approximately 30 to 50 examiners were employed in about 15 governorates, and worked in pairs at selected polling centers to conduct their observations. The recently completed report is currently being translated from Arabic to English and should be available within days, Jenness said.

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AT LEAST 20 CATEGORY RED COMPLAINTS TO DATE  
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¶5. (C) Jenness confirmed that at least 20 category red complaints have been submitted to the IECI. He stated that the IEAT and IECI complaints staff planned to brief the IECI Board of Directors on December 20 on

the details of these complaints and the planned course of action for each one. Jenness stated that he understood the majority of the complaints pertained to ballot box stuffing, reported periods of time when the observers and monitors were not allowed inside the polling stations, and periods of time when the ballots were allegedly in the sole control of Iraqi security forces and not the IECI.

16. (C) Since category red complaints, if proven, could impact the results of the elections, Jenness emphasized that the IECI wanted to carefully review them to ensure they were properly acted upon. The timing of this IECI Board review coincides with the deployment of the audit teams, allowing the board to take advantage of these teams in order to conduct on-location timely follow-up as needed.

17. (C) Jenness stated that on the night of December 19 the Board reviewed a total of 150 complaints out of the 900 already submitted. He pointed out that they also discussed the volumes of complaints submitted by Ayad Allawi whose coalition did not use the prescribed complaint form but instead submitted narrative reports. Unfortunately, Jenness pointed out, these reports did not identify the witness who saw the irregularity nor did the reports provide enough detailed information to accurately determine the appropriate polling center, polling station, or other intended location. Although these reports by and large do not meet the proscribed reporting criteria, Jenness indicated that the IECI will apply leniency and consider the reports as valid complaints.

18. (C) Possible IECI action the IECI can take in the case of category red violations, Jenness explained, include invalidating votes at the polling station and center level, excluding the entire ballot box results if necessary. If the action appears criminal in nature, Jenness indicated that the IECI would not conduct that type of investigation, and that the disposition of any such investigation would not impact on the certification of the elections.

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IECI BOARD REMAINS IN STATE OF INTERNAL TURMOIL  
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19. (C) Due partially to external and internal complaints lodged against the Out of Country Voting (OCV) process as well as personal sniping, the IECI Board of Directors have been embroiled in a continuous internal struggle over OCV, with board meetings often resulting in prolonged shouting matches. Jenness told PolOff that these arguments have been going on for several days, and are now impacting on the ability of the board to focus on other business at hand. He singled out Commissioner Farid as the loudest voice calling for full audits of the OCV process, claiming widespread internal corruption as well as cases of voting fraud. As an interim measure, Jenness indicated that the IECI will conduct audits in London (neutral location) and Turkey (reports of possible voter fraud).

110. (C) To counter Farid, other commissioners have taken the position that international observers have largely regarded OCV a success, and that the IECI internal checks were sufficient to detect incidents of corruption on the part of any commissioner or staff. Jenness opined that this prolonged event was based largely on personal motives by Farid against Commissioner Hamdia who took the lead on OCV. While other commissioners may have had concerns over the way OCV was conducted, they resented the virulent attacks by Farid.

111. (C) The IECI suffered one casualty possibly related to this matter. After another lengthy session between Farid and IECI Chairman Izaddin where each firmly held their own ground, Izaddin suddenly took ill, displaying symptoms of a heart attack. Swift medical response brought him to the MNF-I Casualty Support Hospital in the International Zone where he was pronounced to be in satisfactory condition. Doctors later revealed he likely did not suffer a heart attack, but he did demonstrate symptoms often associated with extreme stress. Due largely to a prior heart condition, doctors kept Izaddin in the hospital overnight for observations and more tests.

112. (C) Jenness later revealed to PolOff that the commissioners all but blamed Farid for contributing to, if not being the direct cause, of Izaddin's sudden change of health. He added that he expressed his own disappointment, as the UN Commissioner to the IECI,

for Farid's conduct during board meetings that contributed directly to the inability of the IECI to move forward with its agenda. Jenness stated that the commissioners planned to urge Farid to take a vacation. With Commissioner Hamdia expected to return to Amman on December 20, and with Commissioner Izaddin out of action for an undetermined amount of time, Jenness stated that the IECI board needed to pull together if they expected to overcome these latest adversities as well as other looming challenges soon to be faced by the Board.

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COMMENT  
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13. (C) The IECI's internal bickering has led them to a major crossroads in IECI board management. Whether the UN commissioner or one of the remaining commissioners steps up to instill order remains to be seen. In the interim, the audit teams are on their way and the board can now focus on the issue of the red complaints, among other agenda items. These teams have significantly, albeit temporarily, depleted the ranks of the IECI and IEAT staff. However, this has not had an impact on other operations such as the Tally Center which continues pressing ahead with processing the last of the count sheets that have finally arrived from the last remaining governorates.

14. (C) As more preliminary results are released by the IECI, the trend will likely reveal increasing strength by the Shi'a and Kurdish coalitions, steady strength from the Sunni Arab community, with waning strength from Allawi. If that trend continues, the Allawi Coalition will certainly step up in both volume and frequency their complaints against the process. Such a reaction is not unexpected, especially from an aggrieved party first seeking remedy through the electoral process. The IECI's reaction to allegations of fraud is already becoming a bell weather issue for the Sunni Arab political leadership as well. In our conversations with the election commission and UN election advisors we have underlined that the credibility of the IECI as an institution, and the credibility of the election process depends in part on the commission's response to allegations of fraud now coming forward.  
KHALILZAD